

NOTES AND NEWS

At the recent annual meeting of the Cooper Ornithological Society held in Salt Lake City, Utah, the following papers were presented on April 25: The Intermountain Chapter of the Cooper Ornithological Club, by William H. Behle; Bird Remains Collected at Kit Fox Dens, Harold J. Egoscue; Bird Hazard to Aircraft, With Special Reference to Midway Atoll, Johnson A. Neff; Migration Data on the Shorebirds of the San Francisco Bay Region, Junea W. Kelly; Premigratory Changes in Body Weight and Body Fat in Wild and Captive Gambel Sparrows, James R. King and Donald S. Farner; The Common Screech Owl of the Pacific Coast of Mexico, Joe Marshall; Unusual Occurrences and Distribution of Birds in Utah's West Desert Region, John B. Bushman; The Great Horned Owls of Middle America, Robert T. Orr and J. Dan Webster; The Breeding Behavior of Canada Geese on the Ogden Bay Refuge, Utah, Fant W. Martin.

On April 26: The Role of the Ornithologist in Epidemiological Research, Griffith E. Quinby; Some Relationships of Birds to Arthropod-borne Encephalitis Viruses, Clarence A. Sooter; Experiments on Birds as Hosts of the Western Encephalitis Mosquito, Richard P. Dow; Bird Migration and Disease Transmission, John B. Bushman; Bird Parasites and Life History Studies, D. Elmer Johnson; Los Angeles County Museum's Machris Brazilian Expedition, Jean Delacour; Life History of the Lapland Longspur, Wendell Taber; Life History Notes on the Spurred Towhee, Travis G. Haws and C. Lynn Hayward; Factors Affecting Song Behavior of the Spotted Towhee, John Davis; Interrelations of Abert and Brown Towehees at Tucson, Joe Marshall; The Analysis of Waterfowl Displays, Robert I. Smith; African Safari, Ed N. Harrison.

The field trip to Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge provided an excellent opportunity to observe waterbirds.

The meetings were sponsored by the University of Utah, the Utah Audubon Society, and the Utah Nature Study Society.

PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

CHECK-LIST OF NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS. Prepared by a committee of the American Ornithologists' Union. American Ornithologists' Union, Baltimore, Maryland, xiii + 691 pp., 1957. \$8.00 (May be obtained from C. G. Sibley, Fernow Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y.).

The publication of the long-awaited fifth edition of the "A. O. U. Check-list" is another milestone in the progress of American ornithology. The new Check-list reflects the great increase in our knowledge of North American birds since the appearance of the fourth edition in 1931. The fifth edition treats in detail 1686 species and subspecies, 266 more than were included in its predecessor. The geographic area covered is the same as in the fourth edition, "North America north of México, with inclusion of Greenland, Bermuda, and Baja California." The systematic arrangement of the previous edition has been retained, with only a few minor changes.

The new Check-list runs to 691 pages, 165 more than the fourth edition, although the list of extinct species which appeared in the first four editions has been omitted, and there is no section summarizing the changes, additions, and eliminations in the present edition as compared with its predecessor, as was included in the fourth edition. The great length of the fifth edition, despite the elimination of these sections, results from the greatly expanded statements of range given for each form. A few comparisons will indicate the extent of this expansion. The range statement for the Franklin's Gull in the present edition is over four times as long as that given in the fourth edition; the statement for the Sanderling is four times as long; and that for the White-throated Sparrow is three times as long. The great amount of added detail and the numerous citations of localities make the statements of range in the present edition much more useful and accurate. The usability of this detailed material is considerably increased by the separation of breeding range, winter range, and accidental or casual occurrences into separate paragraphs; these were lumped in a single paragraph in the fourth edition. A useful innovation is the addition of a general range statement for geographically variable species preceding the more detailed range statements given for the individual subspecies included. Although the section on extinct species has been omitted, fossil records of recent forms are presented in the general statement of range for the species. Another useful addition is the footnote citation of the original description of the nominate form in those cases in which this form occurs outside the area covered by the Check-list.

Vernacular names are given for species only.

Although this departure may cause some confusion it is nonetheless advantageous, as the major emphasis is on the species rather than on the subspecies, and ornithologists will be less prone to think in terms of subspecies unless a critical determination of specimens is concerned. A number of well-established vernacular names has been changed, and some of these changes seem of dubious value.

The treatment of genera and species is largely middle-of-the-road, neither unduly conservative nor extreme. Not considering purely nomenclatural changes, or changes resulting from additional records or the elimination of some older records as invalid, a total of 40 genera has been dropped from the present edition, and three genera not recognized in the fourth edition have been resurrected. A net total of 37 genera has thus been eliminated from the present Check-list. Some inconsistency in the treatment of genera is evident. Thus, *Balanosphyra* is included in *Melanerpes*, and *Antrostomus* is included in *Caprimulgus*. Reference to the pertinent supplements to the Check-list of North American birds, published in the *Auk*, in which these changes were first announced, shows that the authority cited for these changes was Peters' "Check-list of Birds of the World," in which *Balanosphyra* is merely cited in the synonymy of *Melanerpes*, in the one case, and a footnote states that *Antrostomus* is included in *Caprimulgus* in the other. The same basis was used for the synonymizing of a number of other genera. Yet, *Passerella* and *Melospiza* are retained as separate despite the compelling evidence for the merging of these genera brought forth by Linsdale (Univ. Calif. Publ. Zool., 30, no. 12, 1928) some thirty years ago.

On the species level, we also find some inconsistency. Thus, the jays, *Aphelocoma insularis* and *Aphelocoma californica*, recognized in the fourth edition, have been synonymized with *Aphelocoma coerulescens*, although none of these three forms meets any other in any part of its range. On the other hand, the flickers *Colaptes auratus* and *C. cafer*, the orioles *Icterus galbula* and *I. bullockii*,

and the woodpeckers *Dendrocoptes arizonae* and *D. stricklandi*, are all retained as full species, although interbreeding between the members of these pairs of species has been demonstrated. It might be argued that the final disposition of such cases awaits a thorough study of the biological situation involved in each case, but this leads to a philosophical question. Where there is some evidence of interbreeding between two dissimilar forms, and the situation involved has not been worked out thoroughly, on whom does the burden of proof rest, those who wish to keep them as separate species, or those who wish to consider them as being conspecific? To urge the retention of such forms as full species until thorough studies have been made, a familiar line of thought, is no more logical than to consider them conspecific "until thorough studies have been made."

In a work of this magnitude, it is inevitable that some errors should occur. One of the worst involves the ranges given for the subspecies of the Elf Owl, *Micrathene whitneyi*. *M. w. idonea* is listed as "resident . . . south to Guanajuato, Valley of México, and Puebla (Tehuacán)," and *M. w. whitneyi* "Breeds . . . south to Sonora (Guicocoba), Guanajuato, México, and Puebla."

Adverse criticism of the new Check-list will be inevitable. Some taxonomists will feel that the committee has been overly conservative, and others will feel that it has been too extreme. The local authority whose record of the Hudsonian Godwit in Popskull County has been overlooked will no doubt be up in arms. But in nearly every case, criticism will involve only a few points, most of them minor. In judging an opus of this scope, one must not lose sight of the forest for the trees. The enormous amount of information and considered judgment contained in this volume make it a tremendously valuable contribution to scientific ornithology, indispensable to amateurs and professionals alike. Ornithologists owe a debt of gratitude to the "Check-list Committee," headed by Dr. Alexander Wetmore, for its devoted and untiring efforts.—JOHN DAVIS.

COOPER ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
STATEMENT OF CASH RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 1957

CASH IN BANK, DECEMBER 31, 1956			\$ 7,472.38
ADD: CASH RECEIPTS			
<i>General Publication Fund</i>			
Membership dues, regular and sustaining	\$ 5,777.60		
Subscriptions for The Condor	1,122.40		
Condor sales	439.13		
Phonograph record sales (5 records sold)	37.50		
Dividends and interest received on endowment funds invested (Note A)	4,351.95		
Contributions received for the publication of The Condor	670.00		
Other cash receipts	861.85	\$13,260.43	
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<i>Avifauna Fund</i>			
Avifauna sales, net (Note B)	\$ 3,795.43		
Contributions received	7,750.00		
Other cash receipts	52.56	11,597.99	
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<i>Endowment Fund</i>			
Life memberships and installment payments received on life memberships	1,065.00		
Contributions received	225.00		
Other cash receipts	173.50	1,463.50	26,321.92
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			33,794.30
DEDUCT: CASH DISBURSEMENTS			
<i>General Publication Fund</i>			
<i>Publication Costs of The Condor</i>			
Printing	\$ 8,334.82		
Engraving	1,594.52		
Purchase of back issues	11.95	\$ 9,941.29	
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Cost of phonograph records			1.56
<i>Administrative Expenses</i>			
Northern division	\$ 108.22		
Southern division	95.10		
Annual meeting	887.62		
Business manager	278.37		
Accounting	150.00		
Treasurer	620.33		
Editor	714.25		
Other disbursements	89.09	2,942.98	
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<i>Avifauna Fund</i>			
Sales tax	\$ 12.54		
Drawings	415.00		
Printing	2,964.67		
Engraving	602.71		
Shipping and Postage	428.34		
Other disbursements	94.98	4,518.24	
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<i>Endowment Fund</i>			
Purchase of corporate stock	\$ 5,238.31	5,238.31	22,642.38
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CASH IN BANK, DECEMBER 31, 1957			\$11,151.92

	December 31, 1956	December 31, 1957
CASH IN BANK ALLOCATED TO FUNDS AS FOLLOWS:		
General Publication Fund	\$ 5,345.10	\$ 2,025.03
Avifauna Fund	2,047.14	9,126.89
Endowment Fund	80.14	
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TOTAL	\$ 7,472.38	\$11,151.92

Note A: At December 31, 1957, the business manager had in his custody endowment funds invested in corporate stocks which cost \$50,978.62 and had a market value of \$89,064.63. This endowment fund includes contributions received in the names of Florence M. Bailey, Louis B. Bishop, Albert E. Colburn, Joseph Grinnell, A. Brazier Howell, Harry R. Panton, and Isabel A. Thomson.

Note B: At December 31, 1957, the Society had a stock of Avifaunas for which the total of quoted list prices was \$37,493.00.

C. V. DUFF, *Business Manager*